

The Correlation between English Sentences and Their Voices in the Process of Translation

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Abstract

Languages provide their speakers with a variety of constructions that help them communicate effectively and efficiently. Two out of these constructions are active and passive forms. Some languages as Persian believe that an active sentence is usually preferable to a passive sentence because an active one is shorter, stronger and more direct. While some other languages as English believe that passive voice is used more frequently because it is a regular feature in formal especially scientific written texts. Based on what was mentioned above we can arrive at this conclusion that in order to have a fluent text, changing the voices in the process of translation is a must.

Although active sentences and passive ones share a common sense, and sometimes each of the active and passive have the same meaning and each one can be used instead of the other but not all passive sentences have the same meaning as that of the active. The present research helps the translators how to translate a text as natural as possible because if they know under what conditions it is obligatory to change the voice of sentences in the process of translation from English into Persian or vice versa, consequently they will produce the appearance that seems original.

Keywords: translation, active voice, passive voice.

1. Introduction

The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text) in the original verbal language (the source language) into a written text (the target text) in a different verbal language (the target language) (Munday, 2004).

Some researchers such as Munday (2004) and House (2009) described translation in three categories as follows:

1. Intra-lingual translation, or 'rewording': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language';
2. Interlingual translation, or 'translation proper': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language';
3. Intersemiotic translation or 'transmutation': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign system'.

Nakhallah (2010) described translation problems can be divided into linguistic problems and cultural problems: the linguistic problems include grammatical differences, lexical ambiguity and meaning ambiguity.

A passive construction occurs when you make the object of an action into the subject of a sentence. That is, whoever or whatever is performing the action is not the grammatical subject of the sentence. Often given to developing writers, active voice is somehow far superior to passive voice. We say that a verb is in the active voice when the grammatical subject of the verb is the person or agent responsible for the action expressed by the verb. We say that a verb is in the passive voice when the grammatical subject of the verb is functionally the object or result of the action expressed by the verb. The agent or source of the action may be added in a prepositional phrase, but it can be (and often is) omitted (Hubbuck, 2006).

The passive voice is a grammatical construction in which the subject of a sentence or clause denotes the recipient of the action rather than the performer, which is, a category of verbs that is related to what thing or person is acting and what thing or person is being acted upon (Arianna, 2011).

English and Persian languages apply both passive and active voices. In Persian active voice is more frequently used while there is not the same scenario in English. That is, English language prefers passive voice more frequently. This issue is problematic for students with lack of knowledge of grammar to choose the appropriate voice in the process of translation; therefore, they get easily confused in this regard. Choosing in accurate voice leads to a weak translation. It should be noted here that both active and passive constructions exist in English as well as in Persian. In the English language, the English passive voice is formed with an auxiliary verb (usually be or get) plus a participle (usually the past participle) of a transitive verb. In Persian the passive voice sometimes is formed with a past participle plus derivation of auxiliary verb of "šodan".

Methven believed that the majority of cases, syntactic passives in English should be translated into active Chinese sentences. The frequency of passive use in English is far higher, and many writers agree that English has a tendency to overuse passives, whereas Chinese tends to avoid them. In a parallel corpus analyzed by Methven only 20% of the English passives were translated into Chinese passives and the rest of passive sentences were translated into Chinese actives (2006).

Passive voice does sound weak, and although it's okay sometimes, it should be used sparingly. Active voice should always be your first choice; change to passive only if the particular sentence warrants it. But overuse or misuses of passive voice makes weak translation or writing so because of we have good translation or writing we should know when active or passive voice is appropriate or preferred and also understand how both active and passive sentences are structured.

A translated text is judged successful by most readers when it is read fluently and a translator is judged successful in the process of translation when he /she produces the appearance that is not translated, that is the original. The present study helps the translators to translate a text as natural as possible because if they know under what conditions it is obligatory to change the voice of sentences in the process of translation, consequently they will produce the appearance that seems original.

Based on the abovementioned reasons the following null hypothesis is formulated:

H₁: there will be no significant change of voice in the process of translation from English into Persian.

2. Methodology

2.1. Instruments

A number of English passive sentences and clauses from the book **Pride and Prejudice** by Austen in 2012 and their Persian equivalents in book **Ghoror va Ta'asob** by Rezay in 2012 were used to study the hypothesis mentioned above.

2.2. Procedures

To achieve the objectives of this study the following procedures were done by the researchers:

1. This project considered two books in order to study the change of voice in the process of translation from English into Persian. The researchers chose an English novel and its Persian translation.
2. The researchers elicited the passive sentences in the afore-mentioned English novel to compare them with their equivalents in Persian.
3. Finally, the collected data was analyzed.

3. Result and discussion

As mentioned above, this paper was an attempt to study the change of voice in translation from English into Persian. As table 1 indicates 307 passive sentences and clauses were elicited from the mentioned English novel. To do so, the researchers divided the English novel into three parts, then 20 pages out of each part were studied. Totally 60 pages as a good sample have been carefully analyzed. Firstly the passive sentences of these 60 pages were identified to be compared with their equivalence in the target language, Persian. Therefore, 18 sentences out of the 307 passive sentences were translated into passive form the target language and the rest were translated into active ones. The present research shows that 94 percent of English passive sentences were translated into Persian as active ones.

The following chart indicates the percentage of change of voice from English into Persian which shows that 94% of English passive voices change into Persian active voice in the process of translation and rest of the sentences are translated into Persian passive voices.

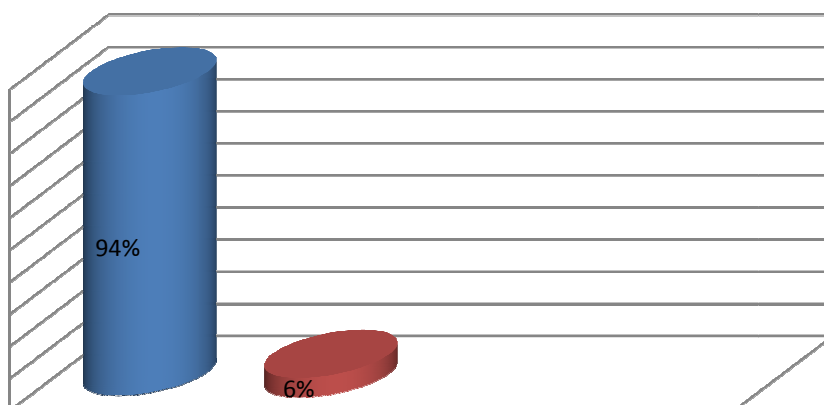


Figure 1

- The change of English passive into Persian active
- English Passive voices were translated into Persian passive

Table 1. English passive voice and its translation in Persian

ENGLISH		PERSIAN	
Passive		Passive	Active
NO.			
307		18	291

As it was mentioned in table 1 the Persian translator was more concerned with the meaning and appropriateness than form of the sentences in the process of translation from English into Persian. That is, he preferred the naturalness of the language over accuracy. In other words, the form was sacrificed for naturalness and clarity. This conclusion can be arrived at that the change of voice is an unavoidable point in translation process. Based on what we shared in this section, it is inferred that there was a significant change of voice in translating from English into Persian; therefore, the formulated hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant change of voice in the process of translation from English into Persian, was rejected.

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Under the following conditions the change of voice seems to be obligatory in the translation process:

- meaning-orientation
- form orientation
- fluency

This is the limitation of the present study that the present researchers did not go further to identify which of the above- mentioned conditions were served more in this study. Thus, it is suggested to the future researchers interested in this study to find out which of these conditions are the main reasons behind changing the voice of English sentences while they are translated into Persian. Of course, sometimes there is no clear reason for changing the voice of some rare sentences; therefore, these sentences are usually classified by the term residual.

4. Conclusion

It was mentioned earlier that 307 passive sentences and clauses from the English novel, **Pride and Prejudice** by Austen in 2012 and their Persian translation, **Ghoror va Ta'asob** by Rezay in 2012, were elicited. 23 out of 307 passive sentences were untouched from the voice point of view but 291 out of 307 passive sentences were changed into active ones in the translation process.

One of the essential findings of the present study worth highlighting was that, although equivalence is the central issue in translation, today it is undoubtedly one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of translation theory because, as it was seen earlier in the current study, the translator of the book **Pride and Prejudice** has usually tried to find some relative equivalents for the source language in the receptor one by changing the voice of some sentences in

the process of translation. It is clear that from the grammatical point of view languages may differ from one another to a greater degree or lesser degree, therefore, the translators may face the problem of not finding a translation equivalent.

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